

P R E F A C E

The General Assemblies of the International Astronomical Union are landmarks in the life of the world-wide astronomical community, as they review, at triennial intervals, the progress made in this scientific field, promulgate the most spectacular astronomical achievements, formulate scientific programmes for the years to come and, last but not least, deal with the administration and finances of the IAU.

The Reports on Astronomy 1976, published as Transactions XVIA (in 3 volumes) before the XVith General Assembly, are a synopsis of the work done in astronomy from 1973 to 1975.

The volume "Highlights of Astronomy, as presented at the XVith General Assembly of the IAU in Grenoble, 1976" includes some selected scientific topics, and will appear in the first half of 1977. Apart from the Invited Discourses and the Proceedings of the seven Joint Discussions, the Highlights volume No.4 contains the proceedings of two Joint Commissions Meetings.

The present volume, subtitled "Proceedings of the XVith General Assembly, Grenoble, 1976" contains the full record of the Inaugural Ceremony, the report of the two sessions of the XVith General Assembly, the resolutions it adopted, the slate of the Executive Committee, the Presidents, Vice-Presidents and general members of the Union's 40 Commissions, and the alphabetical list of IAU Members as of December 1976. The volume also contains the reports of Commission meetings held during the assembly and the report of the Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature. In compliance with the request of the organizers and editors of three Joint Commissions Meetings, (1. "Topics in Interstellar Matter," 2. "CNO Isotopes," 3. "Supernovae,") their detailed proceedings are being published in separate volumes by the D. Reidel Publishing Company; and the discussion on Solar Flares ("How can solar flares be understood?") held by Commission 10 will be published in an issue of Solar Physics. The report of the Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature (WGPSN) gives details on the topographic nomenclature of the Moon and Planets, as formulated at the various meetings of the WGPSN since its creation in 1973 in Sydney, and as endorsed by the XVith General Assembly. It also reproduces a table of names of Apollo Landing Sites, as approved by the XVth General Assembly, but not published in Transactions, volume XVB.

It should be pointed out that the Report of the Executive Committee on the Union's activity and finances for 1973-1975 has been published in Information Bulletin No.36 which appeared in June 1976. It is reproduced herein on p. 565, as an appendix to Part 1.

The size of the volume corresponds to the intensified activity of Commissions and Working Groups in Grenoble and also reflects the increased number of IAU Members, their alphabetical list covering more than 150 pages.

The present book is the first Transactions volume produced by the method of offset printing from camera-ready manuscripts. It is the result of a combined effort of the outgoing and incoming Commission Presidents, Commission Secretaries, Chairmen of Working Groups, and the IAU Secretariat. On behalf of the Union I wish to express my sincere thanks to everyone who made a contribution to this volume. My thanks are due in particular to my secretaries Mme R. Bertschi and Mme R. Läubli for their painstaking and careful editorial work.

Edith A. Müller
General Secretary